

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

IN SIX VOLUMES



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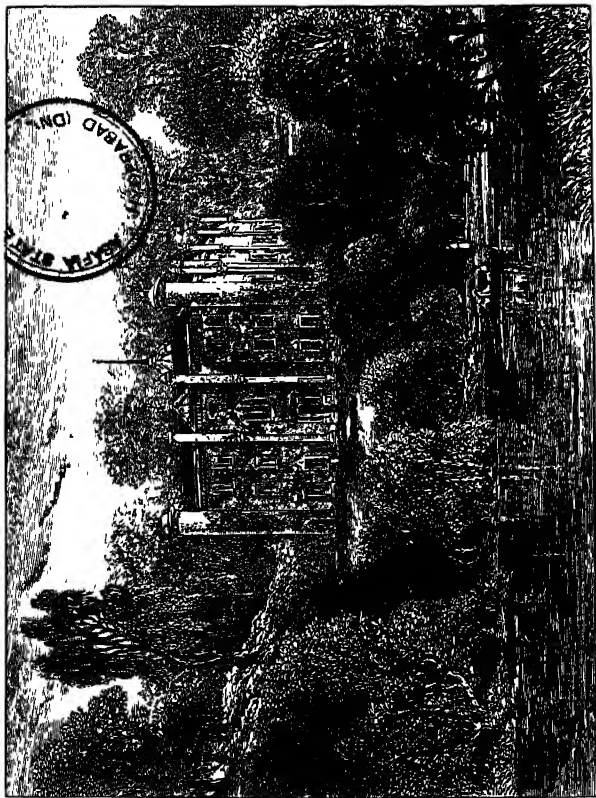
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HOPE END, HEREFORDSHIRE.

POEMS

CROWNED AND WEDDED.

I.

WHEN last before her people's face her own fair face
she bent,
Within the meek projection of that shade she was
content
to erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as
if it might
still kept holy from the world to childhood still in
sight—
erase it with a solèmn vow, a princely vow—to
rule ;
piestly vow—to rule by grace of God the pitiful ;
every godlike vow—to rule in right and righteous-
ness
with the law and for the land—so God the vower
bless !

II.

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I
ween,

And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty
aislèd scene ;

The priests stood stolèd in their pomp, the sworded chiefs
in theirs,

And so, the collared knights, and so, the civil ministers,
And so, the waiting lords and dames, and little pages best
At holding trains, and legates so, from countries east and
west ;

So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladie
bright,

Along whose brows the Queen's, now crowned, flashe
coronets to light ;

And so, the people at the gates with priestly hands
high

Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty ;
And so the DEAD, who lie in rows beneath the min
floor,

There verily an awful state maintaining evermore :

The statesman whose clean palm will kiss no
whate'er it be,

The courtier who for no fair queen will rise up t
knee,

The court-dame who for no court-tire will leave her
shroud behind,
The laureate who no courtlier rhyme than "dust to dust"
can find,
The kings and queens who having made that vow and
worn that crown,
Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown:
Dieu et mon droit—what is't to them? what meaning can
it have?—
The King of kings, the right of death—God's judgment
and the grave.
And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair
queen had vowed,
The living shouted "May she live! Victoria, live!"
aloud:
And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed
between,
"The blessings happy monarchs have be thine, O crownèd
queen!"

III.

But now before her people's face she bendeth hers
anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness there-
unto.

She vowed to rule, and in that oath her childhood put
away :

She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love to-
day.

O lovely lady! let her vow! such lips become such
vows,

And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal
brows.

O lovely lady! let her vow! yea, let her vow to love!

And though she be no less a queen, with purples hung
above,

The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to
ground,

Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that
state,

While loving hopes for retinues about her sweetness
wait.

SHE vows to love who vowed to rule—(the chosen at her
side)

Let none say, God preserve the queen! but rather, Bless
the bride!

None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none violate
the dream

Wherein no monarch but a wife she to herself may
seem.

Or if ye say, Preserve the queen ! oh, breathe it inward
low—

She is a *woman*, and *beloved* ! and 't is enough but so.
Count it enough, thou noble prince who tak'st her by the
hand

And claimest for thy lady-love our lady of the land !
And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high
and rare,

And true to truth and brave for truth as some at Augsburg
were,

We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts and by thy poet-
mind

Which not by glory and degree takes measure of man-
kind,

Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for
ring,

And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal
thing.

IV.

And now, upon our queen's last vow what blessings shall
we pray ?

None straitened to a shallow crown will suit our lips to-
day :

Behold, they must be free as love, they must be broad as
free,

Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's
humanity.

Long live she !—send up loyal shouts, and true hearts
pray between,—

“The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O crownèd
queen !”

CROWNED AND BURIED.

I.

NAPOLEON !—years ago, and that great word
 Compact of human breath in hate and dread
 And exultation, skied us overhead—
 An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword
 Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
 In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

II.

Napoleon !—nations, while they cursed that name,
 Shook at their own curse ; and while others bore
 Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
 Brass-fronted legions justified its fame ;
 And dying men on trampled battle-sods
 Near their last silence uttered it for God's.

III.

Napoleon !—sages, with high foreheads drooped,
Did use it for a problem ; children small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call ;
Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs ; and widows with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sat alone.

IV.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud hid ;
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
And over-rushed her mountainous repose
In search of eyries : and the Egyptian river
Mingled the same word with its grand " For ever."

V.

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness,—shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice
Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

VI.

The world's face changed to hear it ; kingly men
Came down in chidden babes' bewilderment
From autocratic places, each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing : then
The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,
To see one throne a composite of thrones.

VII.

Napoleon !—even the torrid vastitude
Of India felt in throbbings of the air
That name which scattered by disastrous blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood.
Napoleon !—from the Russias west to Spain :
And Austria trembled till ye heard her chain.

VIII.

And Germany was 'ware ; and Italy
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked—
Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
To serve a newer : ay ! but Frenchmen cast
A future from them nobler than their past :

IX.

For verily though France augustly rose
With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
The purple of the world, none gave so much
As she in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
Whose hands, toward freedom stretched, dropped
 paralysed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

X.

King's crown to a great man's head. And though
 along
Her Paris' streets did float on frequent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
No dream of all so won was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

XI.

Napoleon !—'t was a high name lifted high :
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
Our compassing and covering atmosphere
And open a clear sight beyond the sky
Of supreme empire ; this of earth's was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

XII.

The kings crept out—the peoples sat at home,
And finding the long-invoked peace
(A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered, cursed the corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

XIII.

A deep gloom centered in the deep repose ;
The nations stood up mute to count their dead :
And he who owned the NAME which vibrated
Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes
When earth was all too grey for chivalry,
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

XIV.

O wild Saint Helen ! very still she kept him,
With a green willow for all pyramid,
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
A little more if pilgrims overwept him,
Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

XV.

Nay, not so long ! France kept her old affection
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse ;
Until, dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried " Behold, thou England ! I would have
The dead, whereof thou wottest, from that grave."

XVI.

And England answered in the courtesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit :
" Take back thy dead ! and when thou buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me."
Amen, mine England ! 't is a courteous claim :
But ask a little room too—for thy shame !

XVII.

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England, men might seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek !

XVIII.

I would that hostile fleets had scarréd Torbay,
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a shadow, not to pass away—*
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun :
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done ! *

XIX.

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust
We fain would pay back something of our debt
To France, if not to honour, and forget
How through much fear we falsified the trust
Of a fallen foe and exile. We return
Orestes to Electra—in his urn.

XX.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
To-day a four-years child might carry it
Sleek-browed and smiling, "Let the burden 'bide !"
Orestes to Electra !—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

* Written at Torquay.

XXI.

And run back in the chariot-marks of time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet
The passive victor, death-still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
And martial music, under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz !

XXII.

Napoleon !—he hath come again, borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room !
Room for the dead in Paris ! welcome solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded
column !*

XXIII.

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts !—and this he may : for, dispossessed
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm.

* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

XXIV.

And yet . . . Napoleon !—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world ; and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom won,
The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

XXV.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—granted !
But the *αὐτός* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French ; he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied :

XXVI.

And if they asked for rights, he made reply
“Ye have my glory !”—and so, drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true ! but none
Were ruled like slaves : each felt Napoleon.

XXVII.

I do not praise this man : the man was flawed
For Adam—much more, Christ!—his knee unbent,
His hand unclean, his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why let him have
The justice to be honoured in his grave.

XXVIII.

I think this nation's tears thus poured together,
Better than shouts. I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all.
I think this grave stronger than thrones. But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be worthier, I discern not : angels may.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

I.

LOVING friend, the gift of one
 Who her own true faith has run
 Through thy lower nature,*
 Be my benediction said
 With my hand upon thy head,
 Gentle fellow-creature !

II.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
 Flow thy silken ears adown
 Either side demurely
 Of thy silver-suited breast
 Shining out from all the rest
 Of thy body purely.

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown. (1844.)

III.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
 Alchemize its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold
 With a burnished fulness.

IV.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
 Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curveting,
 Leaping like a charger.

V.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a lig.
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
 Canopied in fringes;
Leap! those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine
 Down their golden inches.

VI.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is 't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness ;
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears
And this glossy fairness.

VII.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unweary,
Watched within a curtained room
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

VIII.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning ;
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone
Love remains for shining.

IX.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow ;
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

X.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing ;
This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech
Or a louder sighing.

XI.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears
Or a sigh came double,
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

XII.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

XIII.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blither choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
“Come out!” praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

XIV.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favour :
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore and for ever.

XV.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
Leaning from my Human.

XVI.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee !
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore, to pat thee !

XVII.

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping !
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,
No man break thy purple cup
Set for drinking deep in.

XVIII.

Whiskered cats aointed flee,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations ;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
Turn to daily rations !

XIX.

Mock I thee, in wishing weal ?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
Thou art made so straitly,
Blessing needs must straiten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

XX.

Yet be blessed to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature ;
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature !

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite ;
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I ;
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
 Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white
Well satisfied with dew and light
 And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,
When all the garden flowers were trim,
The grave old gardener prided him
 On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
 That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined,
Half-smiling as it came to mind
 That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud !

Nor thought that gardener, (full of scorns
For men unlearned and simple phrase,)
A child would bring it all its praise
By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see
The trace of human step departed :
Because the garden was deserted,
The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward ;
We draw the moral afterward,
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall :
A thrush made gladness musical
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white ;
How should I know but roses might
Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew
(Without the melancholy tale)
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories ; till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees, nor feel that childish heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
My footstep from the moss which drew
Its fairy circle round : anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are ;
No more for me ! myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
"The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
My womanhood would cheer.

e time would pass away,
 beside the rose-tree wall,
 od, how seldom, if at all,
Did I look up to pray !

The time is past ; and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for Heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.

MY DOVES

O Weisheit ! Du red'st wie eine Taube !—GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest
 Upon an Indian tree
 Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
 Or motion from the sea ;
 For, ever there the sea-winds go
 With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
 The tropic stars looked down,
 And there my little doves did sit
 With feathers softly brown,
 And glittering eyes that showed their righ'
 To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond
And green leaves round, to interpose
Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers ! Of living loves
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,
Their living voice the likeliest moves
To lifeless intonation,
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
From that glad nest of theirs
Across an ocean rolling grey
And tempest-clouded airs :
My little doves, who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and blue.

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
For sounds of past content,

For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion,
The triumph of the mart,
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold metallic heart,
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,—
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean,
(Their eyes with such a plaintive shine
Are fastened upwardly to mine!)—

Soft falls their chant as on the nest
Beneath the sunny zone ;
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not aweary grown,
And 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love, that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories ;

All echoings from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves ! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown.

'T was hard to sing by Babel's stream—
More hard, in Babel's street :
But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let *us* begin,
Who wear immortal wings within !

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song
And lasting thankfulness,
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields ;
I will have humble thoughts instead
Of silent, dewy fields :
My spirit and my God shall be
My seaward hill, my boundless sea.

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

I.

NINE years old ! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that come :
Yet when *I* was nine, I said
No such word ! I thought instead
That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

II.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
To my childhood's haunted spring ;
I had life, like flowers and bees,
In betwixt the country trees,
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth every thing.

III.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow :
Little head leant on the pane,
Little finger drawing down it
The long trailing drops upon it,
And the "Rain, rain, come to-morrow,"
Said for charm against the rain.

IV.

Such a charm was right Canidian,
Though you meet it with a jeer !
If I said it long enough,
Then the rain hummed dimly off,
And the thrush with his pure Lydian
Was left only to the ear ;

V.

And the sun and I together
Went a-rushing out of doors :
We our tender spirits drew
Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither
In the footsteps of the showers.

VI.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
Through the grasses wet and fair,
Straight I sought my garden-ground
With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
A side-shadow of green air.

VII.

In the garden lay supinely
A huge giant wrought of spade !
Arms and legs were stretched at length
In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII.

Call him Hector, son of Priam !
Such his title and degree.
With my rake I smoothed his brow,
Both his cheeks I weeded through,
But a rhymersuch as I am,
Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies :
Nose of gillyflowers and box ;
Scented grasses put for locks,
Which a little breeze at pleasure
Set a-waving round his eyes :

X.

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light ;
Purple violets for the mouth,
Breathing perfumes west and south ;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight :

XI.

And a breastplate made of daisies,
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf ;
Periwinkles interlaced
Drawn for belt about the waist ;
While the brown bees, humming praises,
Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII.

And who knows (I sometimes wondered)
If the disembodied soul
Of old Hector, once of Troy,
Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered,
Rolling up the thunder-roll?

XIII.

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
In this body rude and rife
Just to enter, and take rest
'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
His heroic heart to life?

XIV.

Who could know? I sometimes started
At a motion or a sound!
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy
With an *ὄτοτοτοτοί*?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
Make the daisies tremble round?

XV.

It was hard to answer, often :
But the birds sang in the tree,
But the little birds sang bold
In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften
Through the courage of their glee.

XVI.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms sleek with rain !
Oh, my garden rich with pansies !
Oh, my childhood's bright romances !
All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again.

XVII.

And despite life's changes, chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming :
Help, some angel ! stay this dreaming !
As the birds sang in the branches,
Sing God's patience through my soul !

XVIII.

That no dreamer, no neglecter
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

I.

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing :
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That, you dropped away in.
On your curls' full roundness stand
Golden lights serenely ;
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
Folds the dimple inly :
Little head and little foot
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lids half shut
Slants the shining azure.
Open-soul in noonday sun,
So you lie and slumber :
Nothing evil having done,
Nothing can encumber.

II.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you ?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you ?
Nay, keep smiling, little child,
Ere the sorrow neareth :
I will smile too ! patience mild
Pleasure's token weareth.
Nay, keep sleeping before loss :
I shall sleep though losing !
As by cradle, so by cross,
Sure is the reposing.

III.

And God knows who sees us twain,
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
As you seem of pleasure.
Very soon too, by His grace
Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
Shall I sleep as soundly.
Differing in this, that you
Clasp your playthings, sleeping,

While my hand shall drop the few
 Given to my keeping :
Differing in this, that I
 Sleeping shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
 Brighter to beholder :
Differing in this beside—
 (Sleeper, have you heard me ?
Do you move, and open wide
 Eyes of wonder toward me ?)—
That while you I thus recall
 From your sleep, I solely,
Me from mine an angel shall,
 With reveillie holy.

SOUNDS.

ἤκουσας ἢ οὐκ ἤκουσας ;

ÆSCHYLUS.

I.

HEARKEN, hearken !

The rapid river carrieth

Many noises underneath

The hoary ocean :

Teaching his solemnity

Sounds of inland life and glee

Learnt beside the waving tree

When the winds in summer prank

Toss the shades from bank to bank,

And the quick rains, in emotion

Which rather gladdens earth than grieves,

Count and visibly rehearse

The pulses of the universe

Upon the summer leaves—

Learnt among the lilies straight

When they bow them to the weight

Of many bees whose hidden hum
 Seemeth from themselves to come—
 Learnt among the grasses green
 Where the rustling mice are seen
 By the gleaming, as they run,
 Of their quick eyes in the sun ;
 And lazy sheep are browsing through
 With their noses trailed in dew ;
 And the squirrel leaps adown
 Holding fast the filbert brown ;
 And the lark, with more of mirth
 In his song than suits the earth,
 Droppeth some in, soaring high,
 To pour the rest out in the sky ;
 While the woodland doves apart
 In the copse's leafy heart,
 Solitary, not ascetic,
 Hidden and yet vocal, seem
 Joining, in a lovely psalm,
 Man's despondence, nature's calm,
 Half mystical and half pathetic,
 Like a singing in a dream.*

* " While floating up bright forms ideal,
 Mistress or friend, around me stream ;
 Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
 Like music mingling with a dream."—*John* .

All these sounds the river telleth,
Softened to an undertone
Which ever and anon he swelleth
By a burden of his own,
 In the ocean's ear :
Ay, and ocean seems to hear
With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

II.

Hearken, hearken !

he child is shouting at his play
 In the tramping funeral's way ;
The widow moans as she turns aside
 To shun the face of the blushing bride
While, shaking the tower of the ancient church,
The marriage bells do swing ;
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits with his lean hands full
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering

unconsciously, with my own " dream," and gave their form to the above distich. The ideas however being sufficient, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued poem I already owe so many. (1844.)

Because it is so brown a thing,
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red'
In and out the senseless head
Where all sweet fancies grew instead :
And you may hear at the self-same time
Another poet who reads his rhyme,
Low as a brook in summer air,
Save when he droppeth his voice adown^t
To dream of the amaranthine crown
His mortal brows shall wear :
And a baby cries with a feeble sound
'Neath the weary weight of the life new^t
And an old man groans,—with his testa
Only half-signed,—for the life that 's spe^t
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, "For aye, for aye
And foemen twain, while Earth their mot^t
Looks greenly upward, curse each other :
A school-boy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree looks
A lonely student cries aloud
Eureka! clasping at his shroud ;
A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering ;
A maid forgotten weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting-stone ;

A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail,
A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale,
A muttering gamester shakes the dice,
A reaper foretells goodluck from the skies,
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to them ;
A patriot, leaving his native land to them,
Cries to the world against perjured state ;
A priest disserts
Upon linen skirts,
A sinner screams for one hope more,
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor ;
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,
Because he cannot hear ;
And *he* who on that narrow bier
Has room enough, is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound.

III.

Hearken, hearken !
God speaketh to thy soul,
Using the sùpreme voice which doth confound
All life with consciousness of Deity,
All senses into one,—

As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John
 (For whom did backward roll
The cloud-gate of the future) turned to *see*
The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,
Through the regular breath of the calm creation,
Through the moan of the creature's desolation
Striking, and in its stroke resembling
The memory of a solemn vow
Which pierceth the din of a festival
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall
 The cup with a sudden trembling.

IV.

Hearken, hearken !
God speaketh in thy soul,
Saying, "O thou that movest
With feeble steps across this earth of Mine,
To break beside the fount thy golden bowl
 And spill its purple wine,—
Look up to heaven and see how, like a scroll,
My right hand hath thine immortality
In an eternal grasping ! thou, that lovest
The songful birds and grasses underfoot,
And also what change mars and tombs pollute—
I am the end of love ! give love to *Me* !

O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound
Than all thy sin ! sit still beneath My rood,
And count the droppings of My victim-blood,
And seek none other sound !”

V.

Hearken, hearken !
Shall we hear the lapsing river
And our brother's sighing ever,
And not the voice of God ?

SONNETS

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air :
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the manifest
God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
And with the full life of consummate Heaven
Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.
The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,
Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven
For wronging him,—and in the darkness prest
From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,
Sing, seraph with the glory ! heaven is high ;
Sing, poet with the sorrow ! earth is low :
The universe's inward voices cry
“ Amen ” to either song of joy and woe :
Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally !

BEREAVEMENT.

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonied fell and could not pray,—
A thought within me to myself did say,
“Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?
Rise, worship, bless Him, in this sackcloth spun,
As in that purple!”—But I answered Nay!
What child his filial heart in words can loose
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely? can he choose
But sob in silence with an upward gaze?—
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears both prayer and praise.

CONSOLATION.

ALL are not taken ; there are left behind
Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring
And make the daylight still a happy thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind :
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comforting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring
Where “dust to dust” the love from life disjoined,
And if, before those sepulchres unmoving
I stood alone, (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth,)
‘Crying “Where are ye, O my loved and loving?”—
I know a Voice would sound, “Daughter, I AM.
Can I suffice for HEAVEN and not for earth?”

TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

IN HER GARDEN

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear thy feet,
Benignant friend, I will not proudly say
As better poets use, "These *flowers* I lay,"
Because I would not wrong thy roses sweet,
Blaspheming so their name. And yet, repeat
Thou, overleaning them this springtime day,
With heart as open to love as theirs to May,
—"Low-rooted verse may reach some heavenly heat,
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-true
Though not as precious." Thou art unperplexed—
Dear friend, in whose dear writings drops the dew
And blow the natural airs,—thou, who art next
To nature's self in cheering the world's view,—
To preach a sermon on so known a text !

*ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY
B. R. HAYDON.*

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn ! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist :
No portrait this, with Academic air !
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will ! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast,
Upon the fulness of the heart at last
Says no grace after meat. My wine has run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled ; yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food :
Dear Christ ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
Singing within myself as bird or bee
When such do field-work on a morn of May.
But, now I look upon my flowers, decay
Has met them in my hands more fatally
Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields and gather more?
Another, sooth, may do it, but not I!
My heart is very tired, my strength is low,
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
That is light.grieving ! lighter, none befell
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears ! what are tears ? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing ; at her marriage-bell
The bride weeps, and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only ! If, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
And touch but tombs,—look up ! those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless ;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness,
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death—
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it ; the marble eyelids are not wet :
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some belovèd voice that was to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
And silence, against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
What hope? what help? what music will undo
That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh,
Not reason's subtle count; not melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew;
Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales
Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress-trees
To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric laws
Self-chanted, nor the angels' sweet "All hail,"
Met in the smile of God: nay, none of these.
Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.

COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet !
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber while I go
In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,
To lose the sense of losing. As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth
Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
Whence harmonies, we cannot understand,
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexèd minors : deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear, and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur "Where is any certain tune
Or measured music in such notes as these ?"
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded ; their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences,
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

WORK.

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to toil ;
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign ; and He assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,
From thy hand and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower, with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near.

FUTURITY.

AND, O belovèd voices, upon which
Ours passionately call because erelong
Ye brake off in the middle of that song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a nigh
In Heaven to hold our idols; and albeit
He brake them to our faces and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS.

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
Like pulses in the Church's brow and breast ;
And by them we find rest in our unrest
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat
God's fellowship as if on heavenly seat.
The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
And sweetest waters on the record sweet :
And one is where the Christ, denied and scorned,
LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,
By help of having loved a little and mourned,
That look of sovran love and sovran pain
Which HE, who could not sin yet suffered, turned
On him who could reject but not sustain !

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word,
No gesture of reproach ; the Heavens serene
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
Their thunders that way : the forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
What that look was, none guess ; for those who
have seen

Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
“ I never knew this man ”—did quail and fall
As knowing straight THAT GOD ; and turned free
And went out speechless from the face of all,
And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
“Thou Peter ! art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break my heart upon,
For all God’s charge to His high angels may
Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday
Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny me ’neath the morning sun?
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
For when thy final need is dreariest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here;
My voice to God and angels shall attest,
Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear.”

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone, with none beside thy bed
To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said
And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
Pray then alone, “O Christ, come tenderly!
By Thy forsaken Sonship in the red
Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—
And the lone garden where Thine agony
Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those
Permitted desolations, comfort mine!
No earthly friend being near me, interpose
No deathly angel ’twixt my face and Thine,
But stoop Thyself to gather my life’s rose,
And smile away my mortal to Divine!”

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarole ;
She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
Far more than of her flax ; and yet the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident control,
The lines—too subtly twisted to unroll—
Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
To the dear Christian Church—that we may do
Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
Thus swift and steadfast, thus intent and strong ;
While thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
Some high calm spheric tune, and prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts like bees
For multitude and thirst of sweetnesses ;
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
That I might hive with me such thoughts and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
Of a weak man's vain wishes ! While I spoke,
The thought I called a flower grew nettle-rough,
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering :
Oh, entertain (cried Reason as she woke)
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to sting !

FLUSH OR FAUNUS

You see this dog ; it was but yesterday
I mused forgetful of his presence here,
Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear :
When from the pillow where wet-cheeked I lay,
A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its way
Right sudden against my face, two golden-clear
Great eyes astonished mine, a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray !
I started first as some Arcadian
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove :
But as the bearded vision closelier ran
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN
Who by low creatures leads to heights of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE.

THE wind sounds only in opposing straits,
The sea, beside the shore ; man's spirit rends
Its quiet only up against the ends
Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
And losing by the loss it apprehends,
The flesh rocks round and every breath it sends
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,
Make room for rest, around me ! out of sight
Now float me of the vexing land abhorred,
Till in deep calms of space my soul may right
Her nature, shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
And rush exultant on the Infinite.

AN APPREHENSION.

IF all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler till its pulse was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge ; I should fear
Some plait between the brows, some rougher chime
In the free voice. O angels, let your flood
Of bitter scorn dash on me ! do ye hear
What *I* say who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face to face with GOD ?

DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
And ruffled without cause, complaining on—
Restless with rest, until, being overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun
Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
A furlong's sigh as if the world were lost.
But what time through the heart and through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore,
And hear submissive o'er the stormy main
God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.

“O DREARY life,” we cry, “O dreary life !”
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife
With Heaven’s true purpose in us, as a knife
Against which we may struggle ! Ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land, savannah-swards
Unweary sweep, hills watch unworn, and rife
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees
To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass
In their old glory : O thou God of old,
Grant me some smaller grace than comes to these !—
But so much patience as a blade of grass
Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of yon grey blank of sky, we might grow faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls ; but since the scope
Must widen early, is it well to droop,
For a few days consumed in loss and taint ?
O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints ? At least it may be said
"Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God."

EXAGGERATION.

WE overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination (given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels overshadowed
By God's clear glory) down our earth to rake
The dismal snows instead, flake following flake,
To cover all the corn; we walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
And pant like climbers: near the alder brake
We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
O brothers, let us leave the shame and sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of GRIEF!—holy herein,
That by the grief of ONE came all our good.

ADEQUACY.

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
Belovèd England, doth the earth appear
Quite good enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious wills !
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear
Strong stars without significance insphere
Our habitation : we, meantime, our ills
Heap up against this good and lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
I ask thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand ! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can :
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light ! that thou to woman's claim
And man's, mightst join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman ! dost deny
The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity ?
Ah, vain denial ! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn,—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name : and while before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire !

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years
Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
And the great breath of all things summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at. Nature's lute
Sounds on, behind this door so closely shut,
A strange wild music to the prisoner's ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine :
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
Streams, forests, glades, and many a golden train
Of sunlit hills transfigured to Divine.

'INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony:
But, like a wind-exposed distorted tree,
We are blown against for ever by the curse
Which breathes through Nature. Oh, the world is weak!
The effluence of each is false to all,
And what we best conceive we fail to speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall,
And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
Fit peroration without let or thrall.

TWO SKETCHES.

H. B.

I.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall
May take your memory to the perfect Greek,
But when you front her, you would call the cheek
Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
That bloom it wears could leave you critical,
And that smile reaching toward the rosy streak ;
For one who smiles so has no need to speak
To lead your thoughts along, as steed to stall.
A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open mart !
Let no man call the liberal sweetness, sin,—
For friends may whisper as they stand apart,
“Methinks there's still some warmer place within.”

A. B.

II.

HER azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee ,
Her fair superfluous ringlets without check
Drop after one another down her neck,
As many to each cheek as you might see
Green leaves to a wild rose ; this sign outwardly,
And a like woman-covering seems to deck
Her inner nature, for she will not fleck
World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy
Must call her in Love's name ! and then, I know,
She rises up, and brightens as she should,
And lights her smile for comfort, and is slow
In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
To smell this flower, come near it ! such can grow
In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropped blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET.

THE simple goatherd between Alp and sky,
Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
Esteems not his own stature larger by
The apparent image, but more patiently
Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching fist,
While the snow-mountains lift their amethyst
And sapphire crowns of splendour, far and nigh,
Into the air around him. Learn from hence
Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
Your way still onward up to eminence !
Ye are not great because creation drew
Large revelations round your earliest sense,
Nor bright because God's glory shines for you.

THE POET.

THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast
And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed
He views with the first glory. Fair and good
Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
But stand before him holy and undressed
In week-day false conventions, such as would
Drag other men down from the altitude
Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
Why, God would tire of all his heavens, as soon
As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst
Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon !
And therefore hath He set thee in the midst
Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune
And praise His world for ever, as thou bidst.

HIRAM POWERS' "GREEK SLAVE."

THEY say Ideal beauty cannot enter
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
An alien Image with enshackled hands,
Called the Greek Slave ! as if the artist meant her
(That passionless perfection which he lent her,
Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)
To so confront man's crimes in different lands
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
Art's fiery finger, and break up ere long
The serfdom of this world. Appeal, fair stone,
From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong !
Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
East griefs but west, and strike and shame the strong,
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

LIFE.

EACH creature holds an insular point in space ;
Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,
But all the multitudinous beings round
In all the countless worlds with time and place
For their conditions, down to the central base,
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
Life answering life across the vast profound,
In full antiphony, by a common grace ?
I think this sudden joyaunce ^{which} illumines
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs :
I think this passionate sigh, which half-begun
I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

LOVE.

WE cannot live, except thus mutually
We alternate, aware or unaware,
The reflex act of life : and when we bear
Our virtue outward most impulsively,
Most full of invocation, and to be
Most instantly compellant, certes there
We live most life, whoever breathes most air
And counts his dying years by sun and sea.
But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth
Throw out her full force on another soul,
The conscience and the concentration both
Make mere life, Love. } For Life in perfect whole
And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
As Nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.

HEAVEN AND EARTH.

“ And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour.”

God, who with thunders and great voices kept
Beneath Thy throne, and stars most silver-paced
Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
Melodious angels round, canst intercept
Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept
All back, all back (said he in Patmos placed,)
To fill the heavens with silence of the waste
Which lasted half an hour ! Lo, I who have wept
All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,
And by that dread response of curse and groan
Men alternate across these hemispheres,
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour’s hush alone,
In compensation for our stormy years :
As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan !

THE PROSPECT.

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,
Leaning their faces on the window-pane
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from their view :
And thus, alas, since God the maker drew
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,—
The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,—
We miss the prospect which we are called unto
By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,
O man, my brother ! Hold thy sobbing breath,
And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong !
That so, as life's appointment issueth,
Thy vision may be clear to watch along
The sunset consummation^{*}-lights of death.

*HUGH STUART BOYD.**

HIS BLINDNESS.

GOD would not let the spheric lights accost
This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
With all her beckoning hills whose golden stuff
Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.
Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—
Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
To catch fair visions rendered full enough
By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—
Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's Spring,
And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eves :
Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,
Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves
Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing.

* To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of "Cyprus Wine." There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848 ; Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier in this than the absent), fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sat by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS DEATH, 1848.

BELOVED friend, who living many years
With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
To visible nature's elemental cheers !
God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
Because thou wast aweary of this one ;—
I think thine angel's patience first was done,
And that he spake out with celestial tears,
“Is it enough, dear God? then lighten so
This soul that smiles in darkness !”

Steadfast friend,
Who never didst my heart or life misknow,
Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,—
How can I wonder when I see thee go
To join the Dead found faithful to the end?

HUGH STUART BOYD.

LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the Dying left me,—Æschylus,
And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
Of stars whose motion is melodious.
The books were those I used to read from, thus
Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
The darkness of his eyes; now, mine they mock,
Blinded in turn by tears; now, murmurous
Sad echoes of my young voice, years ago
Intoning from these leaves the Grecian phrase,
Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down
In silence on the shelf there, within gaze;
And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
Chime in the day which ends these parting-days!

POEMS

THE LOST BOWER.

I.

IN the pleasant orchard-closes,
“God bless all our gains,” say we ;
But “May God bless all our losses”
Better suits with our degree.

Listen, gentle—ay, and simple ! listen, children on
the knee !

II.

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade :

Summer-snow of apple-blossoms running up from
glade to glade.

III.

There is one hill I see nearer
In my vision of the rest ;
And a little wood seems clearer
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy
upland crest.

IV.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles,
Thrills in leafy tremblement,
Like a heart that after climbing beateth quickly
through content.

V.

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-top's bound ;
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground :
You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with
sight and glad with sound.

VI.

For you hearken on your right hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all ;
And the squirrels crack the filberts through their
cheerful madrigal.

VII.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale,
And five apple-trees stand dropping
Separate shadows toward the vale
Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you
their "All hail !"

VIII.

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of
paradise.

IX.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods alsò,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the
sunshine and the snow.*

X.

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and far survey ;
'T was a straight walk unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay ;
Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of
holiday.

XI.

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for overbranching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it by a glamour past
dispute !

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's Visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

XII.

Few and broken paths showed through it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back
into the sun.

XIII.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow :
I could pierce them ! *I* could longer
Travel on, methought, than so :
Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver children climb and
creep where they would go.

XIV.

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude :
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sat to meet him in a wood :
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with
solitude.

XV.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving in their island-
citadel.

XVI.

Thus I thought of the old singers
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me, and the
barrier branches strong.

XVII.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
I stood suddenly astonished—I was gladdened un-
aware.

XVIII. .

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated
· Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily
across.

XIX.

Here a linden-tree stood, bright'ning
All adown its silver rind ;
For as some trees draw the lightning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from the sky
where it was shrined.

XX.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew ;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that bower of beauty which I sing
of thus to you.

XXI.

'T was a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide :
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-
cunning plied.

XXII.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music than for footsteps
on the walk !

XXIII.

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place ;
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from
the base.

XXIV.

And the ivy veined and glossy
Was enwrought with eglantine ;
And the wild hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window-mullion, did right sylvanly
entwine.

XXV.

Rose-trees either side the door were
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding
at the wall.

XXVI.

As I entered, mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot ;
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very rare and absolute.

XXVII.

All the floor was paved with glory,
Greenly, silently inlaid
(Through quick motions made before me)
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted over-
head.

XXVIII.

"Is such pavement in a palace?"
So I questioned in my thought:
'The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my
doubt.

XXIX.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, downward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet
blessing well.

XXX.

Down to floor and up to ceiling
Quick I turned my childish face,
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place
To the trees, which surely knew it in partaking of the
grace.

XXXI.

Where's no foot of human creature
How could reach a human hand?
And if this be work of Nature,
Why has Nature turned so bland,
Breaking off from other wild-work? It was hard to
understand.

XXXII.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause in tender rueing
Here of all her sylvan scorn?
Or in mock of Art's deceiving was the sudden mild-
ness worn?

XXXIII.

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong,
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the last true
poet's song?

XXXIV.

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on the blessed
Sabbath days?

XXXV.

So, young muser, I sat listening
To my fancy's wildest word :
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music which was rather
felt than heard.

XXXVI.

Softly, finely, it inwound me ;
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain, falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little water Naiad sitting smilingly within.

XXXVII.

Whence the music came, who knoweth ?
I know nothing : but indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters at the oldest
river-head.

XXXVIII.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness ! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-*evanished* Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to
the mark.

XXXIX.

Never nightingale so singeth :
Oh, she leans on thorny tree
And her poet-song she flingeth
Over pain to victory !
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not
to me.

XL.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the bushes
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer
heavens complete.

XLI.

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamèd,
While it sat in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her
silent mouth.

XLII.

If it *were* a bird?—ah, sceptic,
Give me “yea” or give me “nay”—
Though my soul were nympholeptic
As I heard that virèlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is
far away!

XLIII.

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music to my feet
Like a garment rustling downwards—such a silence
followed it!

XLIV.

Heart and head beat through the quiet
Full and heavily, though slower:
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned
me to the Hour.

XLV.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past,
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine I all consciously was
cast.

XLVI.

Face to face with the true mountains
I stood silently and still,
Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies and most debonair
goodwill.

XLVII.

Oh, the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things, with praises
Of the beauty of the truth ;
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for
both.

XLVIII.

And I said within me, laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus, fashioned half in
Chance and half in Nature's play,
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore
missay.

XLIX.

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
Of this bower not built by one ;
I will go there, sad or merry,
With each morning's benison,
And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I
have won.

L.

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning !
This is truth in its pure grace !)
The next morning, all had vanished, or my wander-
ing missed the place.

LI.

Bring an oath most sylvan-holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew,
By the advent of the snowdrop, by the rosemary and
rue,—

LII.

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance—
That I nevermore upon it turned my mortal countenance.

LIII.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair ;
Never garden-creeper crossed it
With so deft and brave an air,
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard
them there.

LIV.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith,
Under leaf and over brier,
Through the thickets, out of breath ;
Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep
as long as death.

LV.

But his sword of mettle clashèd,
And his arm smote strong, I ween,
And her dreaming spirit flashèd
Through her body's fair white screen,
And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar
alleys green :

LVI.

But for me, I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child-heart ;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Œdipus's grave-place 'mid Colonos' olives
swart.

LVII.

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four-and-twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun ;
So, in 'wilderment of gazing, I looked up and I
looked down.

LVIII.

Years have vanished since, as wholly
As the little bower did then ;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come again ?
Ah, I cannot change this sighing for your smiling,
brother men !

LIX.

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigour
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a
wood.

LX.

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,
Many a hope and many a power—
Studious health and merry leisure,
The first dew on the first flower !
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the
bower.

LXI.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done,
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompleteness, in the face of what is
won—

LXII.

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is ;
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss ;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for the very
shame of bliss.

LXIII.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break ;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it
ought to take.

LXIV.

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me ;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our false
humanity.

LXV.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye perchance would look away ;—
Ye would answer me, " Farewell ! you
Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words
you say."

LXVI

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial
All the sun and all the shower :
And I suffered many losses,—and my first was of the
bower.

LXVII.

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat ;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest
shall be great.

LXVIII.

One who knew me in my childhood
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes
overcame !

LXIX.

By this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the
bower arise.

LXX.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind ;
And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined ;
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither
grown nor pined.

LXXI.

From those overblown faint roses
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red,
For the winters and the summers which have passed
me overhead.

LXXII.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves :
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth ?
Fay or Faunus—who believes ?
But my heart still trembles in me to the trembling
of the leaves.

LXXIII.

Is the bower lost, then ? who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost ?
Hark ! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and
uttermost.

LXXIV.

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His Throne ;
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—"All
is lost . . . and *won* !"

A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

I.

THEY bid me sing to thee,
 Thou golden-haired and silver-voicèd child—
 With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's defiled—
 With eyes unknowing how tears dim the sight,
 And feet all trembling at the new delight
 Treaders of earth to be !

II.

Ah no ! the lark may bring
 A song to thee from out the morning cloud,
 The merry river from its lilies bowed,
 The brisk rain from the trees, the lucky wind
 That half doth make its music, half doth find,—
 But *I*—I may not sing.

III.

How could I think it right,
New-comer on our earth as, Sweet, thou art,
To bring a verse from out a human heart
Made heavy with accumulated tears,
And cross with such amount of weary years
Thy day-sum of delight?

IV.

Even if the verse were said,
Thou—who wouldst clap thy tiny hands to hear
The wind or rain, gay bird or river clear—
Wouldst, at that sound of sad humanities,
Upturn thy bright uncomprehending eyes
And bid me play instead.

V.

Therefore no song of mine,—
But prayer in place of singing ; prayer that would
Commend thee to the new-creating God
Whose gift is childhood's heart without its stain
Of weakness, ignorance, and changing vain—
That gift of God be thine !

VI.

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shining brow
And pretty winning accents make thee now :
Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate sound
(How sweet !) of "father," "mother," shall be found
The ABBA on thy tongue.

VII.

And so, as years shall chase
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less resemble
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and tremble,
Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
The Ever-loving's face.

WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF "SELECT PASSAGES
FROM THE GREEK FATHERS," ETC.,
TO WHOM THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

I.

If old Bacchus were the speaker,
He would tell you with a sigh
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By queen Juno brushed aside, a
Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

II.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
When the drink is so divine,
And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
Would become your Cyprus wine:

Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
While his one eye overleered,
Nor too large were mouth of Titan
Drinking rivers down his beard.

III.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
That his ears alone pricked out,
Fauns around him pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat :
While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry, " O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
Springs to keep, of such a taste ! "

IV.

But for me, I am not worthy
After gods and Greeks to drink,
And my lips are pale and earthy
To go bathing from this brink :
Since you heard them speak the last time,
They have faded from their blooms,
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

V.

Ah, my friend ! the antique drinkers
Crowned the cup and crowned the brow.
Can I answer the old thinkers
In the forms they thought of, now ?
Who will fetch from garden-closes
Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with roses,
May strike scarlet down the cheek ?

VI.

Do not mock me ! with my mortal
Suits no wreath again, indeed ;
I am sad-voiced as the turtle
Which Anacreon used to feed :
Yet as that same bird demurely
Wet her beak in cup of his,
So, without a garland, surely
I may touch the brim of this.

VII.

Go,—let others praise the Chian !
This is soft as Muses' string,
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
This is rapid as his spring,

Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
Light as ever trod her feet ;
And the brown bees of Hymettus
Make their honey not so sweet.

VIII.

Very copious are my praises,
Though I sip it like a fly !
Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
Change before me suddenly :
As Ulysses' old libation
Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX.

And I think of those long mornings
Which my thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek :
Past the pane the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep's-bell's tinkling noise
While a girlish voice was reading,
Somewhat low for *ai* s and *oi* s.

X.

Then, what golden hours were for us !

While we sat together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air !
How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines,
And the rolling anapæstic
Curled like vapour over shrines !

XI.

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous,
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
In the gnarlèd oak beneath !
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch's place,
And who made the whole world loyal
Less by kingly power than grace !

XII.

Our Euripides, the human,
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touches of things common
Till they rose to touch the spheres !

Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals !—
These were cup-bearers undying
Of the wine that 's meant for souls.

XIII.

And my Plato, the divine one,
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light !
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak.

XIV.

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
As a liberal mouth of gold ;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old :
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies,—
Who forged first his linkèd stories
In the heat of ladies' eyes.

XV.

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious
As he whistled dogs and gods.
And we both praised Nazianzen
For the fervid heart and speech :
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

XVI.

Do you mind that deed of Atè
Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading “De Virginitate,”
From the first line to the last ?
How I said at ending, solemn
As I turned and looked at you,
That Saint Simeon on the column,
Had had somewhat less to do ?

XVII.

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
Very gently, be it said,
Since our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread !

And I charged you with extortions
On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
Stained the purple they would fold.

XVIII.

For the rest—a mystic moaning
Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in,
And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean and the sun.

XIX.

And Medea we saw burning
At her nature's planted stake :
And proud Œdipus fate-scorning
While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow, slower,
Till he stood discrowned, resigned !—
But the reader's voice dropped lower
When the poet called him BLIND.

XX.

Ah, my gossip ! you were older,
And more learned, and a man !
Yet that shadow, the enfolder
Of your quiet eyelids, ran
Both our spirits to one level ;
And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer-sun's green revel,
To your eyes that could not see.

XXI.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
Which goes shining night and day !
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
Shed their fragrance in your way !
Is it not right to remember
All your kindness, friend of mine,
When we two sat in the chamber,
And the poets poured us wine ?

XXII.

So, to come back to the drinking
Of this Cyprus,—it is well,
But those memories, to my thinking,
Make a better oenomei ;

WINE OF CYPRUS

And whoever be the speaker,
None can murmur with a sigh
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
I am sipping like a fly.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

" Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath."

Poems on Man, by CORNELIUS MATHEWS.*

I.

WE are borne into life—it is sweet, it is strange.
 We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery
 Which smiles with a change ;
 But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces,
 The Heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is.
 And we think we could touch all the stars that we see ;
 And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth ;
 And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
 The apple of Life which another has found ;
 It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
 And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four.
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore !

* A small volume, by an American poet—as remarkable in thought and manner for a vital sinewy vigour, as the right arm of " Pathfinder." (1844.)

II.

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther ;
We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
 And the lilies look large as the trees ;
And, as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,
And the birds sing like angels, so mystical-fine,
And the cedars are brushing the archangels' feet,
And time is eternity, love is divine,
 And the world is complete.
Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond !
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

III.

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
 And the earth rings again ;
And we breathe out " O beauty ! " we cry out " O truth ! "
And the bloom of our lips drops with wine,
And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline ;
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the
 brain,—
What is this exultation ? and what this despair ?—
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
And we drop from the Fair as we climb to the Fair,
 And we lie in a trance at its feet ;

And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,
And we think him so near he is this side the sun,
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

IV.

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures
Which hideth the soul :
And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the broad water-
course,
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us flies out by a wound.
And we shout so aloud, " We exult, we rejoice,"
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around :
And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
We are deaf to God's voice.
And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears
Yet we are not ashamed,
And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.

Help us, God! trust us, man! love us, woman! "I hold
Thy small head in my hands,—with its grapelets of gold
Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the troth—

I love thee, I leave thee,
Live for thee, die for thee!
I prove thee, deceive thee,
Undo evermore thee!

Help me, God! slay me, man!—one is mourning for
both."

And we stand up though young near the funeral-sheet
Which covers old Cæsar and old Pharamond,
And death is so nigh us, life cools from its heat.

O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair, *art* thou sweet?

v.

Then we act to a purpose, we spring up erect:
We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds,
We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked,
We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole.
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll!

"While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn?

Let us sit on the thrones

In a purple sublimity,

And grind down men's bones

To a pale unanimity.

Speed me, God! serve me, man! I am god over men;

When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again;

'Neath the stripe and the bond,

'Lie and mourn at my feet!"

O Life, O Beyond,

Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VI.

Then we grow into thought, and with inward ascensions

Touch the bounds of our Being.

We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around

With our sensual relations and social conventions,

Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound

Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—

Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides

With its infinite tides

About and above us,—until the strong arch

Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,

And through the dim rolling we hear the sweet calling

Of spirits that speak in a soft under-tongue

The sense of the mystical march :

And we cry to them softly, "Come nearer, come nearer

And lift up the lap of this dark, and speak clearer,

And teach us the song that ye sung !"

And we smile in our thought as they answer or no,

For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know.

Wonders breathe in our face

And we ask not their name ;

Love takes all the blame

Of the world's prison-place ;

And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud,

And we send up the lark of our music that cuts

Untired through the cloud

To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts ;

Yet the angels look down and the mortals look up

As the little wings beat,

And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.

'Twixt the heavens and the earth *can* a poet despond ?

O Life, O Beyond,

Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

VII.

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,

And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken,

And bringing our lives to the level of others,

Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.

“Help me, God ! love me, man ! I am man among men,

And my life is a pledge

Of the ease of another's !”

From the fire and the water we drive out the steam

With a rush and a roar and the speed of a dream ;

And the car without horses, the car without wings,

Roars onward and flies

On its grey iron edge

'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes :

And our hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,

Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies,

And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,

Draws under the world with its turmoils and pothers,

While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms

By humanity's hum at the root of the springs.

And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the
deeps

Of the souls of our brothers,

We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,

“God,” “Liberty,” “Truth,”—which they hearken and
think

And work into harmony, link upon link,

Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,

Shedding sparks of electric responding intense

On the dark of eclipse.

Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
 As from shores of a star
In aphelion, the new generations that cry
Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious reply,
 "God," "Liberty," "Truth !"
 We are glorious forsooth,
 And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be donned.
 O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

VIII.

Help me, God ! help me, man ! I am low, I am weak :
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins ;
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains
 From my spirit's serene,
And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
 On my organized clay ;
 I sob not, nor shriek,
 Yet I faint fast away :
I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
 On the heaven-heights of truth.
 Oh, the soul keeps its youth
But the body faints sore, it is tried in the race,

It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal,
It is weak, it is cold,
The rein drops from its hold,
It sinks back, with the death in its face.
On, chariot! on, soul!
Ye are all the more fleet—
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet!

IX.

Love us, God! love us, man! we believe, we achieve:
Let us love, let us live,
For the acts correspond;
We are glorious, and DIE:
And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
That smiles with a change,
Here we lie.
O DEATH, O BEYOND,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

. . . discordance that can accord.

Romaunt of the Rose.

A ROSE once grew within
 A garden April-green,
 In her lonesness, in her lonesness,
 And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
 On a tall bough and straight :
 Early comer, early comer,
 Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
 South winds to let her in,
 In her lonesness, in her lonesness,
 All the fairer for that oneness.

“For if I wait,” said she,

“Till time for roses be,

For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,

Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,

“What glory then for me

In such a company?—

Roses plenty, roses plenty,

And one nightingale for twenty!

“Nay, let me in,” said she

“Before the rest are free,

In my lonesness, in my lonesness,

All the fairer for that oneness.

“For I would lonely stand

Uplifting my white hand,

On a mission, on a mission,

To declare the coming vision.

“Upon which lifted sign,

What worship will be mine!

What addressing, what caressing,

And what thanks and praise and blessing!

“A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

“Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn as to a brightness,—

“And every moth and bee
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o’er me, wheeling o’er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

“Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed,
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntide.

“Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

“I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When below on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy.

“And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling
To give grace to my foretelling.”

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her lonesness, in her lonesness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah,—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy’s.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green,
Scarcely having, scarcely having
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so,
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas :
Guess him in the Happy Islands,
Learning music from the silence !

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both,
Doing honour, doing honour
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
As on a royal crown ;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose, “Ha, snow !
And art thou fallen so ?
Thou, who wast enthronèd stately
All along my mountains lately ?

“Holla, thou world-wide snow !
And art thou wasted so,
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee ?”

—Poor Rose, to be misknown !
Would she had ne’er been blown,
In her liveness, in her liveness,
All the sadder for that oneness !

Some word she tried to say,
Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway !
But the passion did o’ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her.

—Dropped from her fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said "Verily and thus
It chances too with *us*
Poets, singing sweetest snatches
While that deaf men keep the watches :

"Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,
In a loneliness, in a loneliness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

"Holy in voice and heart,
To high ends, set apart :
All unmated, all unmated,
Just because so consecrated.

"But if alone we be,
Where is our empery?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can mete our lofty nature?

“What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimèd ringing?

“What angel but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim?
And without assimilation,
Vain is interpenetration.

“And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season?

“Drop, leaf! be silent, song!
Cold things we come among:
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

“Howbeit” (here his face
Lightened around the place,
So to mark the outward turning
Of its spirit’s inward burning)

“Something it is, to hold
In God’s worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

“Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty’s sign and shadow!

“Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us.

“Though none us deign to bless,
Blessèd are we, natheless ;
Blessèd still and consecrated
In that, rose, we were created.

“Oh, shame to poet’s lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi!*

“Shame, shame to poet’s soul
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit!

“Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones!
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass unchallenged by you.

“Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

“In prayers, that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

“In faith, that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission,
With an unfulfilled fruition,—

“In hope, that apprehends
An end beyond these ends,
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly,—

“In thanks, for all the good
By poets understood,
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

“For sights of things away
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

“For life, so lovely-vain,
For death, which breaks the chain,
For this sense of present sweetness,
And this yearning to completeness !”

THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

I.

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out from among us
straightway !

While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of
divine :

There 's a little fair brown nightingale who, sitting in the
gateway,

Makes fitter music to our ear than any song of
thine !"

II.

The poet went out weeping ; the nightingale ceased
chanting :

"Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweet-
ness done ?"

—“ I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet
wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under
sun.”

III.

The poet went out weeping, and died abroad, bereft
there ;
The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand
wails :
And when I last came by the place, I swear the music
left there
Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's.

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

I.

"THERE is no God" the foolish saith,
 But none "There is no sorrow,"
 And nature oft the cry of faith
 In bitter need will borrow :
 Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
 By wayside graves are raisèd,
 And lips say "God be pitiful,"
 Who ne'er said "God be praised."
Be pitiful, O God !

II.

The tempest stretches from the steep
 The shadow of its coming,
 The beasts grow tame and near us creep,
 As help were in the human ;
 Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and grind,
 We spirits tremble under—

The hills have echoes, but we find
No answer for the thunder.

Be pitiful, O God !

III.

The battle hurtles on the plains,
Earth feels new scythes upon her ;
We reap our brothers for the wains,
And call the harvest—honour :
Draw face to face, front line to line,
One image all inherit,—
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
Clay—clay, and spirit—spirit.

Be pitiful, O God !

IV.

The plague runs festering through the town,
And never a bell is tolling,
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling :
The young child calleth for the cup,
The strong man brings it weeping,
The mother from her babe looks up,
And shrieks away its sleeping.

Be pitiful, O God !

V.

The plague of gold strikes far and near,
And deep and strong it enters ;
This purple chimar which we wear
Makes madder than the centaur's :
Our thoughts grow blank, our words grow strange,
We cheer the pale gold-diggers,
Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
And marked, like sheep, with figures.
Be pitiful, O God !

VI.

The curse of gold upon the land
The lack of bread enforces ;
The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
Like more of Death's White Horses :
The rich preach "rights " and "future days,"
And hear no angel scoffing,
The poor die mute, with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing.
Be pitiful, O God !

VII.

We meet together at the feast,
To private mirth betake us ;

We stare down in the winecup, lest
Some vacant chair should shake us :
We name delight, and pledge it round—
“It shall be ours to-morrow !”
God’s seraphs, do your voices sound
As sad, in naming sorrow?
Be pitiful, O God !

VIII.

We sit together, with the skies,
The steadfast skies, above us,
We look into each other’s eyes,
“And how long will you love us ?”
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless,—
“Till death us part !”—O words, to be
Our *best*, for love the deathless !
Be pitiful, O God !

IX.

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed :
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night “Be stronger-hearted !”
O God—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely !

To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only !
Be pitiful, O God !

X.

The happy children come to us
And look up in our faces ;
They ask us " Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places ? "
We cannot speak ;—we see anew
The hills we used to live in,
And feel our mother's smile press through
The kisses she is giving.
Be pitiful, O God !

XI.

We pray together at the kirk
For mercy, mercy solely :
Hands weary with the evil work,
We lift them to the Holy.
The corpse is calm below our knee,
Its spirit, bright before Thee :
Between them, worse than either, we—
Without the rest or glory.
Be pitiful, O God !

XII.

We leave the communing of men,
The murmur of the passions,
And live alone, to live again
With endless generations :
Are we so brave? The sea and sky
In silence lift their mirrors,
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
Recoil from their own terrors.
Be pitiful, O God !

XIII.

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding :
The sun strikes through the farthest mist
The city's spire to golden :
The city's golden spire it was,
When hope and health were strongest,
But now it is the churchyard grass
We look upon the longest.
Be pitiful, O God !

XIV.

And soon all vision waxeth dull ;
Men whisper " He is dying ; "

We cry no more "Be pitiful!"

We have no strength for crying:
No strength, no need. Then, soul of mine,
Look up and triumph rather!
Lo, in the depth of God's Divine,
The Son adjures the Father

BE PITIFUL, O GOD!

A PORTRAIT.

One name is Elizabeth.—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.

Ten times have the lilies blown
Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,
Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air :

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient, waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures, for the rest,
Which come softly—just as she,
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks,—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels (you feel) the sun.

And her smile it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper "You have done a
Consecrated little Una."

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
"'T is my angel, with a name!"

And a stranger, when he sees her
In the street even, smileth stilly,
Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Softens, sleeken every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth, whereon she passes,
With the thymy-scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray "God love her!"
Ay and always, in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOETH.

CONFESSIONS.

I.

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw
her:

God and she and I only, there I sat down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession: "Speak, I am
holding thee fast,

As the angel of resurrection shall do it at the last!"

"My cup is blood-red

With my sin," she said,

"And I pour it out to the bitter lees,

As if the angels of judgment stood over me strong at the
last,

Or as thou wert as these."

II.

When God smote his hands together, and struck out thy
soul as a spark

Into the organized glory of things, from deeps of the
dark,—

Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst thou honour
the power in the form,

As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or even the little
ground-worm ?

“I have sinned,” she said,

“For my seed-light shed

Has smouldered away from His first decrees.

The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the ground-leaf praiseth
the worm ;

I am viler than these.”

III.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not trample thee
straight

With His wild rains beating and drenching thy light
found inadequate ;

When He only sent thee the north-wind, a little search-
ing and chill,

To quicken thy flame—didst thou kindle and flash to the
heights of His will ?

“I have sinned,” she said,

“Unquickened, unspread,

My fire dropt down, and I wept on my knees :

I only said of His winds of the north as I shrank from
their chill,

What delight is in these ? ”

IV.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not meet it as
such,

But tempered the wind to thy uses, and softened the world
to thy touch,

At least thou wast moved in thy soul, though unable to
prove it afar,

Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel, not giving it out
like a star?

“I have sinned,” she said,

“And not merited

The gift He gives, by the grace He sees!

The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the hill-side praiseth
the star;

I am viler than these.”

V.

Then I cried aloud in my passion,—Unthankful and
impotent creature,

To throw up thy scorn unto God through the rents in thy
beggarly nature!

If He, the all-giving and loving, is served so unduly,
what then

Hast thou done to the weak and the false and the
changing,—thy fellows of men?

“I have *loved*,” she said,
 (Words bowing her head
 As the wind the wet acacia-trees)
 “I saw God sitting above me, but I . . I sat among men,
 And I have loved these.”

VI.

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral trumpet that takes
 The lowest note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing
 breaks
 On the air with it solemn and clear,—“Behold ! I have
 sinned not in this !
 Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have
 verily loved not amiss.
 Let the living,” she said,
 “Inquire of the dead,
 In the house of the pale-fronted images :
 My own true dead will answer for me, that I have not
 loved amiss
 In my love for all these.

VII.

“The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep
 it by day and by night ;
 Their least step on the stair, at the door, still throbs
 through me, if ever so light ;

Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, far off
in the long-ago years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through the
crystals of tears.

Dig the snow," she said,
"For my churchyard bed,
Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,
If one only of these my beloveds shall love me with
heart-warm tears,
As I have loved these !

VIII.

"If I angered any among them, from thenceforth my own
life was sore ;
If I fell by chance from their presence, I clung to their
memory more :
Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes
called sweet ;
And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell down
straight at their feet.
I have loved," she said,—
"Man is weak, God is dread,
Yet the weak man dies with his spirit at ease,
Having poured such an unguent of love but once on the
Saviour's feet
As I lavished for these."

IX.

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the Human, and left the
Divine!

Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee their
wild-berry wine?

Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers
approached thee with blame,

Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved
thee the same?

But she shrunk and said

“God, over my head,

Must sweep in the wrath of his judgment-seas,
If *He* shall deal with me sinning, but only indeed the
same

And no gentler than these.”

LOVED ONCE.

I.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
 Earth's lamentable sounds,—the welladay,
 The jarring yea and nay,
 The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
 The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—
 But all did leaven the air
 With a less bitter leaven of sure despair
 Than these words—"I loved ONCE."

II.

And who saith "I loved ONCE"?
 Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love foresee,
 Love, through eternity,
 And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
 Not God, called LOVE, His noble crown-name casting
 A light too broad for blasting:
 The great God, changing not from everlasting,
 Saith never "I loved ONCE."

III.

Oh, never is "Loved ONCE"
Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, misprizèd friend !
Thy cross and curse may rend,
But having loved Thou lovest to the end.
This is man's saying—man's : too weak to move
One spherèd star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
By his No More, and Once.

IV.

How say ye "We loved once,"
Blasphemers ? Is your earth not cold enow,
Mourners, without that snow ?
Ah friends, and would ye wrong each other so ?
And could ye say of some whose love is known,
Whose prayers have met your own,
Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone
So long,—"We loved them ONCE" ?

V.

Could ye "We loved her once"
Say calm of me, sweet friends, when out of sight ?
When hearts of better right
Stand in between me and your happy light ?

Or when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
 Ye find my colours fade,
And all that is not love in me decayed ?
 Such words—Ye loved me ONCE !

VI.

 Could ye “We loved her once”
Say cold of me when further put away
 In earth’s sepulchral clay,
When mute the lips which deprecate to-day ?
Not so ! not then—least then ! When life is shriven
 And death’s full joy is given,—
Of those who sit and love you up in heaven
 Say not “We loved them once.”

VII.

 Say never ye loved ONCE :
God is too near above, the grave beneath,
 And all our moments breathe
Too quick in mysteries of life and death,
For such a word. The eternities avenge
 Affections light of range.
There comes no change to justify that change,
 Whatever comes—Loved ONCE !

VIII.

And yet that same word ONCE
Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said,
Shaking a discrowned head,
“We ruled once,”—dotards, “We once taught and
led,”
Cripples once danced i’ the vines, and bards approved,
Were once by scornings moved :
But love strikes one hour—LOVE ! Those *never* loved
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

I.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
 For my thoughts to live in,
 When for earth too fancy-loose,
 And too low for heaven :
 Hush ! I talk my dream aloud,
 I build it bright to see,—
 I build it on the moonlit cloud
 To which I looked with *thee*.

II.

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
 Faced with amber column,
 Crowned with crimson cupola
 From a sunset solemn :
 May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
 Pale and glimmering,
 With a sunbeam hid in each
 And a smell of spring.

III.

Build the entrance high and proud,
Darkening and then brightening,
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
Veinèd by the lightning :
Use one with an iris-stain
For the door so thin,
Turning to a sound like rain
As I enter in.

IV.

Build a spacious hall thereby
Boldly, never fearing ;
Use the blue place of the sky
Which the wind is clearing :
Branched with corridors sublime,
Flecked with winding stairs,
Such as children wish to climb
Following their own prayers.

V.

In the mutest of the house
I will have my chamber ;
Silence at the door shall use
Evening's light of amber,

Solemnizing every mood,
Softening in degree,
Turning sadness into good
As I turn the key.

VI.

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless, glorified
When the sunbeams come here—
Wandering harpers, harping on
Waters stringed for such,
Drawing colour, for a tune,
With a vibrant touch.

VII.

Bring a shadow green and still
From the chesnut-forest,
Bring a purple from the hill,
When the heat is sorest ;
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet-wove around,
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound.

VIII.

Bring fantastic cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith,
Ranged for sculptures round the room,
Named as Fancy weeneth ;
Some be Junos, without eyes,
Naiads, without sources,
Some be birds of paradise,
Some, Olympian horses.

IX.

Bring the dewes the birds shake off
Waking in the hedges,—
Those too perfumed, for a proof,
From the lilies' edges :
From our England's field and moor,
Bring them calm and white in,
Whence to form a mirror pure
For Love's self-delighting.

X.

Bring a grey cloud from the east
Where the lark is singing,
(Something of the song at least
Unlost in the bringing) :

That shall be a morning-chair,
Poet-dream may sit in
When it leans out on the air,
Unrhymed and unwritten.

XI.

Bring the red cloud from the sun,
While he sinketh catch it ;
That shall be a couch,—with one
Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for poet's finest thought
At the curfew-sounding ;
Things unseen being nearer brought
Than the seen, around him.

XII.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh.
'Las, they come together !
Cloudy walls divide and fly
As in April weather.
Cupola and column proud,
Structure bright to see,
Gone ! except that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee*.

XIII.

Let them ! Wipe such visionings
From the fancy's cartel :
Love secures some fairer things,
Dowered with his immortal.
The sun may darken, heaven be bowed,
But still unchanged shall be.—
Here, in my soul,—that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with THEE !

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA.

I.

THE ship went on with solemn face ;
To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward :
I bowed down weary in the place,
For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

II.

Thick sleep which shut all dreams from me,
And kept my inner self apart
And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away and left me free,
Made conscious of a human heart
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III.

The new sight, the new wondrous sight !
The waters round me, turbulent,
The skies impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
Half glorified by that intent
Of holding the day-glory !

IV.

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
The meeting line of sea and sky,
With aspect still and mystic :
I think they did foresee the sun,
And rested on their prophecy
In quietude majestic,

V.

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,
Like statues by the open tomb
Of shining saints half risen.
The sun !—he came up to be viewed,
And sky and sea made mighty room
To inaugurate the vision.

VI.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run
As red wine through the hills, and break
Through many a mist's inurning ;
But, here, no earth profaned the sun :
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
The sacrament of morning.

VII.

Away with thoughts fantastical !
I would be humble to my worth,
Self-guarded as self-doubted :
Though here no earthly shadows fall,
I, joying, grieving without earth,
May desecrate without it.

VIII.

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves ;
I would not praise the pageant high
Yet miss the dedicature :
I, carried toward the sunless graves
By force of natural things,—should I
Exult in only Nature?

IX.

And could I bear to sit alone
 'Mid Nature's fixed benignities,
 While my warm pulse was moving?
Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
 Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
 To satisfy the loving !

X.

It seems a better lot than so,
 To sit with friends beneath the beech,
 And feel them dear and dearer ;
Or follow children as they go
 In pretty pairs, with softened speech,
 As the church-bells ring nearer.

XI.

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day !
 The sea sings round me while ye roll
 Afar the hymn unaltered,
And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,
 And bless me deeper in the soul,
 Because the voice has faltered.

XII.

And though this sabbath comes to me
Without the stolèd minister
Or chanting congregation,
God's Spirit brings communion, He
Who brooded soft on waters drear,
Creator on creation.

XIII.

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher
Where keep the saints with harp and song
An endless sabbath morning,
And on that sea commixed with fire
Oft drop their eyelids, raised too long
To the full Godhead's burning.

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

I.

My lonely chamber next the sea
 Is full of many flowers set free
 By summer's earliest duty :
 Dear friends upon the garden-walk
 Might stop amid their fondest talk
 To pull the least in beauty.

II.

A thousand flowers, each seeming one
 That learnt by gazing on the sun
 To counterfeit his shining ;
 Within whose leaves the holy dew
 That falls from heaven has won anew
 A glory, in declining.

III.

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
 The nightingale's being over ;
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
 Of dreamer turned to lover.

IV.

Deep violets, you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
 Without a thought disloyal ;
And cactuses a queen might don
If weary of a golden crown,
 And still appear as royal.

V.

Pansies for ladies all,—I wis
That none who wear such brooches miss
 A jewel in the mirror ;
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
 Its beauty's secret nearer.

VI.

Love's language may be talked with these ;
To work out choicest sentences,
 No blossoms can be meeter ;
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
 Or meanings be the sweeter.

VII.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
 Their longer bloom decreeing,
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
 Too earnestly for seeing.

VIII.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there may have
 A type which seemeth worthy
Of that fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
 Then perished as the earthy.

IX.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
 Their rainbow colours viewing
May feel them, with a silent start,
The covenant, his childish heart
 With nature made, renewing.

X.

No flowers our gardened England hath
To match with these, in bloom and breath,
 Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
 The elements presiding.

XI.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
 With prodigal rewarding :
(For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
 To light her through the garden).

XII.

But here, all summers are comprised,
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
 Before the priestly moonshine ;
And every wind with stolèd feet
In wandering down the alleys sweet
 Steps lightly on the sunshine.

XIII.

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses that
 No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the rushing sound
He dares not use upon such ground
 To ever-trickling waters.

XIV.

Yet, sun and wind ! what can ye do
But make the leaves more brightly show
 In posies newly gathered ?
I look away from all your best
To one poor flower unlike the rest,
 A little flower half-withered.

XV.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened ;
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

XVI.

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows :
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 't was only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

XVII.

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall
In pale refraction driven !
How sadly plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of heaven !

XVIII.

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
And garden blooms, to look on.

XIX.

But SHE for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given,—
Oh, if her face she turnèd then,
Let none say 't was to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon !

XX.

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies, warm oracles
For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
Belovèd friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing !

THE MASK.

I.

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
 I have a jest for all I meet,
 I have a garland for my head
 And all its flowers are sweet,—
 And so you call me gay, she said.

II.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
 And Wrong did teach this jesting bold;
 These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
 While a death-chime was tolled:
 And what now will you say?—she said.

III.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
 Which slurs the sunshine half a mile.

Live captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV.

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness dying suns diffuse :
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,
The ending of my day, she said.

V.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,
It were the happier way, she said.

VI.

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly smile the Dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve !
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII.

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear ;
'T is bought with pangs long nourishèd,
And rounded to despair :
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

VIII.

Ye weep for those who weep? she said—
Ah fools ! I bid you pass them by.
Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say? she said.

CALLS ON THE HEART.

I.

FREE Heart, that singest to-day
 Like a bird on the first green spray,
 Wilt thou go forth to the world
 Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
 To follow, perhaps, thy way?
 Where the tamer thine own will bind,
 And, to make thee sing, will blind,
 While the little hip grows for the free behind?
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“No, no!
 Free hearts are better so.”

II.

The world, thou hast heard it told,
 Has counted its robber-gold,
 And the pieces stick to the hand;
 The world goes riding it fair and grand,
 While the truth is bought and sold;

WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

I.

IF I were thou, O butterfly,
And poised my purple wing to spy
The sweetest flowers that live and die,

II.

I would not waste my strength on those,
As thou,—for summer has a close,
And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III.

If I were thou, O working bee,
And all that honey-gold I see
Could delve from roses easily,

IV.

I would not hive it at man's door,
As thou,—that heirdom of my store
Should make him rich and leave me poor.

V.

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the cloud,

VI.

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling stone
Which the next storm may trample down.

VII.

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

VIII.

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

IX.

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut-up window heard,
Like Love's sweet Yes too long deferred,

X.

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade
As thus, methought, an angel said,—

XII.

“If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong,

XIII.

“I would not waste my cares, and choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV.

“I would not work where none can win,
As *thou*,—halfway 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above and judge within.

XV.

“I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—towards fame’s regality,
Nor yet in love’s great jeopardy.

XVI.

“I would not champ the hard cold bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,
But take God’s freedom, using it.

XVII.

“I would not play earth’s winter out,
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII.

“Then sing, O singer!—but allow,
Beast, fly and bird, called foolish now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as *thou*.”

MEMORY AND HOPE.

I.

BACK-LOOKING Memory

And prophet Hope both sprang from out the ground;
One, where the flashing of cherubic sword

Fell sad in Eden's ward,

And one, from Eden earth within the sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,

What time the promise after curse was said,

"Thy seed shall bruise his head."

II.

Poor Memory's brain is wild,

As moonstruck by that flaming atmosphere

When she was born ; her deep eyes shine and shone

With light that conquereth sun

And stars to wanner paleness year by year :

With odorous gums she mixeth things defiled,

She trampleth down earth's grasses green and sweet

With her far-wandering feet.

III.

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness killing ;
She teacheth every melancholy sound
To winds and waters round ;
She droppeth tears with seed where man is tilling
The rugged soil in his exhausted hours ;
She smileth—ah me ! in her smile doth go
A mood of deeper woe.

IV.

Hope tripped on out of sight,
Crowned with an Eden wreath she saw not wither,
And went a-nodding through the wilderness
With brow that shone no less
Than a sea-gull's wing, brought nearer by rough weather,
Searching the treeless rock for fruits of light ;
Her fair quick feet being armed from stones and cold
By slippers of pure gold.

V.

Memory did Hope much wrong
And, while she dreamed, her slippers stole away ;
But still she wended on with mirth unheeding,
Although her feet were bleeding,

Till Memory tracked her on a certain day,
And with most evil eyes did search her long
And cruelly, whereat she sank to ground
In a stark deadly swoond.

VI.

And so my Hope were slain,
Had it not been that THOU wast standing near—
Oh Thou who saidest “Live,” to creatures lying
In their own blood and dying!
For Thou her forehead to Thine heart didst rear
And make its silent pulses sing again,
Pouring a new light o’er her darkened eyne
With tender tears from Thine.

VII.

Therefore my Hope arose
From out her swoond and gazed upon Thy face,
And, meeting there that soft subduing look
Which Peter’s spirit shook,
Sank downward in a rapture to embrace
Thy piercèd hands and feet with kisses close,
And prayed Thee to assist her evermore
To “reach the things before.”

VIII.

Then gavest Thou the smile
Whence angel-wings thrill quick like summer lightning,
Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where she never
From Love and Faith may sever :—
Whereat the Eden crown, she saw not whitening
A time ago, though whitening all the while,
Reddened with life to hear the Voice which talked
To Adam as he walked.

HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY.

I.

WE sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may rest,
And then, at moments, suddenly
We look up to the great wide sky,
Inquiring wherefore we were born,
For earnest or for jest?

II.

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond ;
We strike out blindly to a mark
Believed in, but not seen.

III.

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
 Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat :
While, freshening upward to His feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
 Expands from world to world.

IV.

And, in the tumult and excess
 Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
 Through all things that are done.

V.

God keeps His holy mysteries
 Just on the outside of man's dream ;
In diapason slow, we think
To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath His eyes,
 Like swans adown a stream.

VI.

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
Of His great beauty?—exaltations
From His great glory?—strong previsions
Of what we shall be?—intuitions
Of what we are—in calms and storms
Beyond our peace and passions?

VII.

Things nameless! which, in passing so,
Do stroke us with a subtle grace;
We say, "Who passes?"—they are dumb;
We cannot see them go or come,
Their touches fall soft, cold, as snow
Upon a blind man's face.

VIII.

Yet, touching so, they draw above
Our common thoughts to Heaven's unknown;
Our daily joy and pain advance
To a divine significance
Our human love—O mortal love,
That light is not its own!

IX.

And sometimes horror chills our blood
To be so near such mystic Things,
And we wrap round us for defence
Our purple manners, moods of sense—
As angels from the face of God
Stand hidden in their wings.

X.

And sometimes through life's heavy swoond
We grope for them, with strangled breath
We stretch our hands abroad and try
To reach them in our agony;
And widen, so, the broad life-wound
Soon large enough for death.

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.

I.

THEY say that God lives very high ;
But if you look above the pines
You cannot see our God ; and why ?

II.

And if you dig down in the mines
You never see Him in the gold ;
Though from Him all that 's glory shines.

III.

God is so good, He wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across His face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

IV.

But still I feel that His embrace

Slides down by thrills, through all things made,
Through sight and sound of every place :

V.

As if my tender mother laid

On my shut lips her kisses' pressure,
Half-waking me at night, and said

"Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?"

THE CLAIM.

I.

GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed one day,
 (Sighing is all her rest,)
 “Wellaway, wellaway, ah wellaway !”
 As ocean beat the stone, did she her breast,
 “Ah wellaway ! ah me ! alas, ah me !”
 Such sighing uttered she.

II.

A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft as rain
 That falls on water,—“Lo,
 The winds have wandered from me ! I remain
 Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot go
 To lean my whiteness on the mountain blue
 Till wanted for more dew.

III.

“The sun has struck my brain to weary peace,
Whereby constrained and pale
I spin for him a larger golden fleece
Than Jason’s, yearning for as full a sail.
Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighèd to thy mind,
Give me a sigh for wind,

IV.

“And let it carry me adown the west !”
But Love, who pròstrated
Lay at Grief’s foot, his lifted eyes possessed
Of her full image, answered in her stead ;
“Now nay, now nay ! she shall not give away
What is my wealth, for any Cloud that flieth :
Where Grief makes moan,
Love claims his own,
And therefore do I lie here night and day,
And eke my life out with the breath she sigheth.”

SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO.

(From *Achilles Tatius*.)

IF Zeus chose us a King of the flowers in his mirth,
 He would call to the Rose and would royally crown it ;
 For the Rose, ho, the Rose ! is the grace of the earth,
 Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it :
 For the Rose, ho, the Rose ! is the eye of the flowers,
 Is the blush of the meadows that feel themselves fair,
 Is the lightning of beauty that strikes through the bowers
 On pale lovers who sit in the glow unaware.
 Ho, the Rose breathes of love ! ho, the Rose lifts the cup
 To the red lips of Cypris invoked for a guest !
 Ho, the Rose, having curled its sweet leaves for the world,
 Takes delight in the motion its petals keep up,
 As they laugh to the wind as it laughs from the west !

A DEAD ROSE.

I.

O ROSE, who dares to name thee?
 No longer roseate now, nor soft nor sweet,
 But pale and hard and dry as stubble wheat,—
 Kept seven years in a drawer, thy titles shame thee.

II.

The breeze that used to blow thee
 Between the hedgerow thorns, and take away
 An odour up the lane to last all day,—
 If breathing now, unsweetened would forgo thee.

III.

The sun that used to smite thee,
 And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn
 Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,—
 If shining now, with not a hue would light thee.

IV.

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined because
It lay upon thee where the crimson was,—
If dropping now, would darken where it met thee.

V.

The fly that 'lit upon thee
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,—
If 'lighting now, would coldly overrun thee.

VI.

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—
If passing now, would blindly overlook thee.

VII.

The heart doth recognize thee,
Alone, alone! the heart doth smell thee sweet,
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete,
Perceiving all those changes that disguise thee.

VIII.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose, than to any roses bold
Which Julia wears at dances, smiling cold:—
Lie still upon this heart which breaks below thee!

THE EXILE'S RETURN.

I.

WHEN from thee, weeping I removed,
And from my land for years,
I thought not to return, Beloved,
With those same parting tears.
I come again to hill and lea,
Weeping for thee.

II.

I clasped thine hand when standing last
Upon the shore in sight.
The land is green, the ship is fast,
I shall be there to-night.
I shall be there—no longer *we*—
No more with thee !

III.

Had I beheld thee dead and still,
I might more clearly know
How heart of thine could turn as chill
As hearts by nature so ;
How change could touch the falsehood-free
And changeless *thee*.

IV.

But, now thy fervid looks last-seen
Within my soul remain,
'T is hard to think that *they* have been,
To be no more again—
That I shall vainly wait, ah me !
A word from thee.

V.

I could not bear to look upon
That mound of funeral clay
Where one sweet voice is silence—one
Æthereal brow, decay ;
Where all thy mortal I may see,
But never thee.

VI.

For thou art where all friends are gone
Whose parting pain is o'er ;
And I, who love and weep alone,
Where thou wilt weep no more,
Weep bitterly and selfishly
For *me*, not *thee*.

VII.

I know, Beloved, thou canst not know
That I endure this pain ;
For saints in heaven, the Scriptures show,
Can never grieve again :
And grief known mine, even there, would be
Still shared by thee.

THE SLEEP.

He giveth His beloved sleep.—*Psalm cxxvii. 2.*

I.

OF all the thoughts of God that are
 Borne inward into souls afar,
 Along the Psalmist's music deep,
 Now tell me if that any is,
 For gift or grace, surpassing this :
 "He giveth His belovèd—sleep" ?

II.

What would we give to our beloved ?
 The hero's heart to be unmoved,
 The poet's star-tuned harp to sweep,
 The patriot's voice to teach and rouse,
 The monarch's crown to light the brows ?
 He giveth His belovèd—sleep.

III.

What do we give to our beloved ?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to overweep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake :
He giveth His belovèd—sleep.

IV.

“Sleep soft, beloved !” we sometimes say,
Who have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep :
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
He giveth His belovèd—sleep.

V.

O earth, so full of dreary noises !
O men, with wailing in your voices !
O delvèd gold, the wailers heap !
O strife, O curse, that o’er it fall !
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His belovèd—sleep.

VI.

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap :
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
He giveth His belovèd—sleep.

VII.

Ay, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man
Confirmed in such a rest to keep ;
But angels say, and through the word
I think their happy smile is *heard*—
“He giveth His belovèd—sleep.”

VIII.

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the mummers leap,
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on His love repose
Who giveth His belovèd—sleep.

IX.

And friends, dear friends, when it shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let One, most loving of you all,
Say "Not a tear must o'er her fall !
"He giveth His belovèd sleep."

THE MEASURE.

He comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure (שליש).
Isaiah xl.

Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure (שליש).^{*}
Psalms lxxx.

I.

God the Creator, with a pulseless hand
 Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
 'The dust of earth and tears of man in one
 Measure, and by one weight:
 So saith His holy book.

II.

Shall we, then, who have issued from the dust
 And there return,—shall we, who toil for dust,
 And wrap our winnings in this dusty life,
 Say “No more tears, Lord God!
 The measure runneth o’er”?

^{*} I believe that the word occurs in no other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

III.

Oh, Holder of the balance, laughest Thou ?
Nay, Lord ! be gentler to our foolishness,
For His sake who assumed our dust and turns
 On Thee pathetic eyes
 Still moistened with our tears.

IV.

And teach us, O our Father, while we weep,
To look in patience upon earth and learn—
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at last
 These tearful eyes be filled
 With the dry dust of death.

COWPER'S GRAVE.

I.

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's
 decaying ;
 It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their
 praying ;
 Yet let the grief and humbleness as low as silence lan-
 guish :
 Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave
 her anguish.

II.

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the death-
 less singing !
 O Christians, at your cross of hope a hopeless hand was
 clinging !
 O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths be-
 guiling,
 Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while
 ye were smiling !

III.

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming
tears his story,
How discord on the music fell and darkness on the
glory,
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wander-
ing lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-
hearted.

IV.

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adora-
tion ;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good for-
saken,
Named softly as the household name of one whom God
hath taken.

V.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon
him,
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven
hath won him,

Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love
to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird
could find him ;

VI.

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic
senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious in-
fluences :
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its
number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a
slumber.

VII.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his
home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses :
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's
ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and
loving.

VIII.

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious of
that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of
providing,
He testified this solemn truth, while phrenzy desolated,
—Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God created.

IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she
blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her
kisses,—
That turns his fevered eyes around—"My mother!
where 's my mother?"—
As if such tender words and deeds could come from any
other!—

X.

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending
o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unwearied love
she bore him!

Thus woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever
gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes which closed in death
to save him.

XI.

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth can image that
awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round
him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body
parted,
But felt those eyes alone, and knew—"My Saviour! *not*
deserted!"

XII.

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when the cross in
darkness rested,
Upon the Victim's hidden face no love was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning
drops averted?
What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one*
should be deserted?

XIII.

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence
rather;
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son
and Father:
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath
shaken—
It went up single, echoless, "My God, I am forsaken!"

XIV.

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of
desolation!
That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should mar
not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a
vision.

THE WEAKEST THING.

I.

WHICH is the weakest thing of all
 Mine heart can ponder ?
 The sun, a little cloud can pall
 With darkness yonder ?
 The cloud, a little wind can move
 Where'er it listeth ?
 The wind, a little leaf above,
 Though sere, resisteth ?

II.

What time that yellow leaf was green,
 My days were gladder ;
 But now, whatever Spring may mean,
 I must grow sadder.
 Ah me ! a *leaf* with sighs can wring
 My lips asunder ?
 Then is mine heart the weakest thing
 Itself can ponder.

III.

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are pined
And drop together,
And at a blast which is not wind
The forests wither,
Thou, from the darkening deathly curse
To glory breakest,—
The Strongest of the universe
Guarding the weakest !

THE PET-NAME.

. the name

Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress.

Miss MITFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes.*

I.

I HAVE a name, a little name,
 Uncadenced for the ear,
 Unhonoured by ancestral claim,
 Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
 The solemn font anear.

II.

It never did to pages wove
 For gay romance belong ;
 It never dedicate did move
 As "Sacharissa" unto love,
 "Orinda" unto song.

III.

Though I write books, it will be read
 Upon the leaves of none,

And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
Across my funeral-stone.

IV.

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile may win :
Nay, do not smile ! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes and feel withal
The sudden tears within.

V.

Is there a leaf, that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come ?

VI.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time incrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the same ?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound.

VII.

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain,
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter, as to see
That life had any pain.

VIII.

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chesnuts from the hill ;
And through the word our laugh did run
As part thereof : the mirth being done,
He calls me by it still.

IX.

Nay, do not smile ! I hear in it
What none of you can hear,—
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
Around, our human cheer.

X.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
My sisters' woodland glee,

My father's praise I did not miss,
When stooping down he cared to kiss
The poet at his knee,—

XI.

And voices which, to name me, aye
Their tenderest tones were keeping—
To some I never more can say
An answer till God wipes away
In heaven these drops of weeping.

XII.

My name to me a sadness wears :
No murmurs cross my mind—
Now God be thanked for these thick tears
Which show, of those departed years,
Sweet memories left behind.

XIII.

Now God be thanked for years enwrought
With love which softens yet :
Now God be thanked for every thought
Which is so tender it has caught
Earth's guerdon of regret.

XIV.

Earth saddens, never shall remove
 Affections purely given ;
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
 And heighten it with Heaven.

THE MOURNING MOTHER.

(OF THE DEAD BLIND)

I.

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
 For thy blind boy in grave?
 That no more with each other
 Sweet counsel ye can have?
 That he, left dark by nature,
 Can never more be led
 By thee, maternal creature,
 Along smooth paths instead?
 That thou canst no more show him
 The sunshine, by the heat;
 The river's silver flowing,
 By murmurs at his feet?
 The foliage, by its coolness;
 The roses, by their smell;
 And all creation's fulness,
 By Love's invisible?
 .

Weepest thou to behold not
His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
And prayed against in vain—
And under which, sat smiling
The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, wiling
The time by, at a door?
And weepest thou to feel not
His clinging hand on thine—
Which now, at dream-time, will not
Its cold touch disentwine?
And weepest thou still oft,
Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
By speaking in the dark?
Weep on, thou mourning mother!

II.

But since to him when living,
Thou wast both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving,
From a high sphere alone:
Sustain that exaltation,
Expand that tender light,

And hold in mother-passion
Thy Blessèd in thy sight.
See how he went out straightway
From the dark world he knew,—
No twilight in the gateway
To mediate 'twixt the two,—
¶ Into the sudden glory,
Out of the dark he trod,
Departing from before thee
At once to light and GOD !—
For the first face, beholding
The Christ's in its divine,
For the first place, the golden
And tideless hyaline,
With trees at lasting summer
That rock to songful sound,
While angels the new-comer
Wrap a still smile around.
Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
His happy voice he tries,
Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
Than others, o'er his eyes !
Yet still, in all the singing,
Thinks haply of thy song
Which, in his life's first springing,
Sang to him all night long ;

And wishes it beside him,
 With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,
 To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mourning mother !
 Thy blind boy walks in light :
Ye wait for one another
 Before God's infinite.
But thou art now the darkest,
 Thou mother left below—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
 Content that it be so,—
Until ye two have meeting
 Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
 As once thou leddest *his*.
Wait on, thou mourning mother !

A VALEDICTION.

I.

GOD be with thee, my belovèd,—GOD be with thee !
 Else alone thou goest forth,
 Thy face unto the north,
 Moor and pleasance all around thee and beneath thee
 Looking equal in one snow ;
 While I, who try to reach thee,
 Vainly follow, vainly follow
 With the farewell and the hollo,
 And cannot reach thee so.
 Alas, I can but teach thee !
 GOD be with thee, my belovèd,—GOD be with thee !

II.

Can I teach thee, my belovèd,—can I teach thee ?
 If I said, “Go left or right,”
 The counsel would be light,
 The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich thee ;
 My right would show like left ;

My raising would depress thee,
My choice of light would blind thee,
Of way—would leave behind thee,
Of end—would leave bereft.
Alas, I can but bless thee !

May GOD teach thee, my belovèd,—may GOD teach thee !

III.

Can I bless thee, my belovèd,—can I bless thee ?
What blessing word can I
From mine own tears keep dry ?
What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress thee ?
My good reverts to ill ;
My calmnesses would move thee,
My softnesses would prick thee,
My bindings up would break thee,
My crownings curse and kill.
Alas, I can but love thee !

May GOD bless thee, my belovèd,—may GOD bless thee !

IV.

Can I love thee, my belovèd,—can I love thee ?
And is *this* like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When strong as death I fain would watch above thee ?

My love-kiss can deny
No tear that falls beneath it ;
Mine oath of love can swear thee
From no ill that comes near thee,
And thou diest while I breathe it,
And *I*—I can but die !

May God love thee, my' belovèd,—may God love thee !

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

To win the secret of a weed's plain heart.—LOWELL.

I.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever-golden,
 Cankered not the whole year long !
 Do ye teach us to be strong,
 Howsoever pricked and holden
 Like your thorny blooms, and so
 Trodden on by rain and snow,
 Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as where ye grow ?

II.

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms,
 Do ye teach us to be glad
 When no summer can be had,
 Blooming in our inward bosoms ?
 Ye, whom God preserveth still,
 Set as lights upon a hill,
 Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty liveth still !

III.

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak?
Ye, who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek !

IV.

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—
For your teaching, ye should see us
Bowing in prostration new !
Whence arisen,—if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks—O world, they are not tears but
dew.

THE LADY'S "YES."

I.

"YES," I answered you last night;
 "No," this morning, sir, I say:
 Colours seen by candle-light
 Will not look the same by day

II.

When the viols played their best,
 Lamps above and laughs below,
Love me sounded like a jest,
 Fit for *yes* or fit for *no*.

III.

Call me false or call me free,
 Vow, whatever light may shine,—
 No man on your face shall see
 Any grief for change on mine.

IV.

Yet the sin is on us both ;
Time to dance is not to woo ;
Wooing light makes fickle troth,
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

V.

Learn to win a lady's faith
Nobly, as the thing is high,
Bravely, as for life and death,
With a loyal gravity.

VI.

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point her to the starry skies ;
Guard her, by your truthful words,
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

VII.

By your truth she shall be true,
Ever true, as wives of yore ;
And her *yes*, once said to you,
SHALL be Yes for evermore.

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.

I.

SHE has laughed as softly as if she sighed,
 She has counted six, and over,
 Of a purse well filled and a heart well tried —
 Oh, each a worthy lover !
 They “give her time ;” for her soul must slip
 Where the world has set the grooving ;
 She will lie to none with her fair red lip :
 But love seeks truer loving.

II.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
 As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
 With a glance for *one*, and a glance for *some* —
 From her eyelids rising and falling ;
 Speaks common words with a blushful air,
 Hears bold words, unreproving ;
 But her silence says—what she never will swear—
 And love seeks better loving.

III.

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar
And drop a smile to the bringer ;
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
At the voice of an in-door singer.
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes ;
Glance lightly, on their removing ;
And join new vows to old perjuries—
But dare not call it loving.

IV.

Unless you can think, when the song is done,
No other is soft in the rhythm ;
Unless you can feel, when left by One,
That all men else go with him ;
Unless you can know, when unpraised by his breath,
That your beauty itself wants proving ;
Unless you can swear "For life, for death!"—
Oh, fear to call it loving !

V.

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day
On the absent face that fixed you ;
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you ;

Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
Through behoving and unbehoving ;
Unless you can *die* when the dream is past—
Oh, never call it loving !

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

I.

Love me, Sweet, with all thou art,
Feeling, thinking, seeing ;
Love me in the lightest part,
Love me in full being.

II.

Love me with thine open youth
In its frank surrender ;
With the vowing of thy mouth,
With its silence tender.

III.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
Made for earnest granting ;
Taking colour from the skies,
Can Heaven's truth be wanting ?

IV.

Love me with their lids, that fall
Snow-like at first meeting ;
Love me with thine heart, that all
Neighbours then see beating.

V.

Love me with thine hand stretched out
Freely—open-minded :
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
Hearing one behind it.

VI.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
Sudden faint above me ;
Love me with thy blush that burns
When I murmur *Love me !*

VII.

Love me with thy thinking soul,
Break it to love-sighing ;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
On through living—dying.

VIII.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
When the world has crowned thee ;
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
With the angels round thee.

IX.

Love me pure, as musers do,
Up the woodlands shady :
Love me gaily, fast and true,
As a winsome lady.

X.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,
And for something higher.

XI.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, Dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half a year—
As a man is able.

A YEAR'S SPINNING.

I.

HE listened at the porch that day,
To hear the wheel go on, and on ;
And then it stopped, ran back away,
While through the door he brought the sun :
But now my spinning is all done.

II.

He sat beside me, with an oath
That love ne'er ended, once begun ;
I smiled—believing for us both,
What was the truth for only one :
And now my spinning is all done.

III.

My mother cursed me that I heard
A young man's wooing as I spun :

Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,—
For I have, since, a harder known !
And now my spinning is all done.

IV.

I thought—O God !—my first-born's cry
Both voices to mine ear would drown :
I listened in mine agony—
It was the *silence* made me groan !
And now my spinning is all done.

* * *

V.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
(Who cursed me on her death-bed lone)
And my dead baby's (God it save !)
Who, not to bless me, would not moan.
And now my spinning is all done.

VI.

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone !
Sweet neighbours, whisper low instead,
“ This sinner was a loving one—
And now her spinning is all done.”

VII.

And let the door ajar remain,
In case he should pass by anon ;
And leave the wheel out very plain,—
That HE, when passing in the sun,
May see the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

I.

FIVE months ago the stream did flow,
 The lilies bloomed within the sedge,
 And we were lingering to and fro,
 Where none will track thee in this snow,
 Along the stream, beside the hedge.
 Ah, Sweet, be free to love and go !
 For if I do not hear thy foot,
 The frozen river is as mute,
 The flowers have dried down to the root :
 And why, since these be changed since May,
 Shouldst *thou* change less than *they* ?

II.

And slow, slow as the winter snow
 The tears have drifted to mine eyes,
 And my poor cheeks, five months ago
 Set blushing at thy praises so,
 Put paleness on for a disguise.

Ah, Sweet, be free to praise and go !
For if my face is turned too pale,
It was thine oath that first did fail,—
It was thy love proved false and frail,—
And why, since these be changed enow,
Should *I* change less than *thou* ?

I leave the flower growing, the bird unproved ;
 Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*, my beloved,—
 And my lover that day ?

IV.

Go, be sure of my love, by that treason forgiven ;
 Of my prayers, by the blessings they win thee from
 Heaven ;
 Of my grief—(guess the length of the sword by the
 sheath's)
 By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's !
 Go,—be clear of that day !

A REED.

I.

I AM no trumpet, but a reed ;
No flattering breath shall from me lead
 A silver sound, a hollow sound :
I will not ring, for priest or king,
One blast that in re-echoing
 Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

II.

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
A broken reed, the wind indeed
 Left flat upon a dismal shore ;
Yet if a little maid or child
Should sigh within it, earnest-mild
 This reed will answer evermore.

III.

I am no trumpet, but a reed ;
Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
 'Their nets along the river's edge,
I will not tear their nets at all,
Nor pierce their hands, if they should fall :
 Then let them leave me in the sedge.

THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's "Gotter Griechenlands," and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch ("De Oraculorum Defectu"), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude. (1844.)

I.

GODS of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
 Can ye listen in your silence?
 Can your mystic voices tell us
 Where ye hide? In floating islands,
 With a wind that evermore
 Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

II.

In what revels are ye sunken
In old Æthiopia?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?

Pan, Pan is dead.

III.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,
And so kept alive and fine?

Pan, Pan is dead.

IV.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corse
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?

Great Pan is dead.

V.

“ Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas ”
Said the old Hellenic tongue,—
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets’ songs the sweetest sung :
Have ye grown deaf in a day ?
Can ye speak not yea or nay,
Since Pan is dead ?

VI.

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your dréenchèd locks dry slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze?
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye;
For Pan is dead.

VII.

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunderstroke, would
No sob tremble through the tree?
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye :
For Pan is dead.

VIII.

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills
Of the everlasting hills :

Pan, Pan is dead.

IX.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,
With your chariots in procession
And your silver clash of wings !
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities,

Now Pan is dead !

X.

Jove, that right hand is unloaded
Whence the thunder did prevail,
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale !
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XI.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread ?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee
On thy dim, strait, golden bed ?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid ?

Pan, Pan is dead.

XII.

Ha, Apollo ! floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands ?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou !

Pan, Pan is dead.

XIII.

Shall the casque with its brown iron
Pallas' broad blue eyes eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the god-Greek of her lips ?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it ?

Pan, Pan is dead.

XIV.

Bacchus, Bacchus ! on the panther
He swoons, bound with his own vines ;
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly
“ Evohe !—ah—evohe !—
Ah, Pan is dead !”

XV.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone ;
And old Pluto deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun :
Ceres smileth stern thereat,
“ We *all* now are desolate
Now Pan is dead.”

XVI.

Aphrodite ! dead and driven
As thy native foam thou art ;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart !
Ai Adonis ! at that shriek
Not a tear runs down her cheek—
Pan, Pan is dead.

XVII.

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another, huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly ;
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XVIII.

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?

Nay, Pan is dead.

XIX.

Crownèd Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head ;
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unfed :
Scornful children are not mute,—
“Mother, mother, walk afoot,

Since Pan is dead !”

XX.

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!

For Pan is dead.

XXI.

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign!
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine:
Not a grave, to show thereby
Here these grey old gods do lie.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXII.

Even that Greece who took your wages
Calls the obolus outworn;
And the hoarse, deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn:
And the poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—

And Pan is dead.

XXIII.

Gods bereavèd, gods belated,
With your purples rent asunder !
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder !
Now, the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now Pan is dead.

XXI

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward
From the piled Dark behind ;
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail—
“Pan, Pan is dead.”

XXV.

And the rowers from the benches
Fell, each shuddering on his face,
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place ;
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep—
“Pan, Pan is dead.”

XXVI.

And that dismal cry rose slowly
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair !
And they heard the words it said—
PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

XXVII.

'T was the hour when One in Sion
Hung for love's sake on a cross ;
When His brow was chill with dying
And His soul was faint with loss ;
When His priestly blood dropped downward
And His kingly eyes looked throneward--
Then, Pan was dead.

XXVIII.

By the love, He stood alone in,
His sole Godhead rose complete,
And the false gods fell down moaning
Each from off his golden seat ;
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their dcity—

Pan, Pan was dead.

XXIX.

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine ;
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine ;
And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only :
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXX.

Pythia staggered, feeling o'er her
Her lost god's forsaking look ;
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror
And her crispy fillets shook
And her lips gasped, through their foam,
For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXXI.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore !
And I dash down this old chalice
Whence libations ran of yore.
See, the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must,
Since Pan is dead.

XXXII.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track !
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades call you back,
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXIII.

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses
Through your falsehood at the True,—
We will weep *not!* earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—

And Pan is dead.

XXXIV.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth,
And those debonair romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run :
Look up, poets, to the sun !

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXV.

Christ hath sent us down the angels ;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumed by altar-candles
Lit for blessèd mysteries ;
And a Priest's hand through creation
Waveth calm and consecration :
And Pan is dead.

XXXVI.

Truth is fair : should we forgo it ?
Can we sigh right for a wrong ?
God himself is the best Poet,
And the Real is His song.
Sing His truth out fair and full,
And secure His beautiful !
Let Pan be dead !

XXXVII.

Truth is large : our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame, to stand in His creation
And doubt truth's sufficiency !—
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling—
When Pan is dead !

XXXVIII.

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure,
All of praise that hath admonisht,
All of virtue,—shall endure ;
These are themes for poets' uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses,
Ere Pan was dead.

XXXIX.

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
Nor mix falsehood with the whole !
Look up Godward ; speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul :
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty !
Pan, Pan is dead.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.



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